

SEXUAL FEELINGS

Tuning In to Your Turn-Ons

APPRECIATING THE SEXUAL FEELINGS IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES

MY HUSBAND'S SLY SMILE tells me something good is coming my way. I know he is toying with me, enjoying my anticipation as much as I am relishing his attention. I feel a familiar pulsing warmth spread through my body as my skin gently flushes. He takes his sweet time before leaning in and offering me what he knows I am lusting after. As I take his offering into my mouth, my eyes roll back in my head. I moan involuntarily and purr, "This is the most amazing chocolate mousse ever!"

If this scenario reflects an exchange you've had with an intimate other, chances are you are one of millions of people who "get off" on food. I call this experience "taste bud orgasm" and for many couples, it's foreplay. Yet food is only one of many ways we can evoke the compelling mix of sensations

known as "feeling sexual."

Understanding and navigating sexual feelings is a hot topic in my coaching practice, and we should first define our terms here. Many people confuse having sexual feelings with having sex. Yet sexual feelings can occur anytime, anywhere, and for a

variety of reasons. Our sexual feelings help us tune in to the creative pulse of this terrestrial plane. In short, we feel sexual feelings when we are in touch with our earthly aliveness. Many of us need to allow sexual feelings back into our everyday lives.

Chances are you have several subtle sexual feelings a day (perhaps including reading the opening paragraph above). I was 42 before I first started fully paying attention to the quiet fluttery or lightly pulsating sensations that I now recognize as sexual. We all have a unique relationship to this feeling state as well as some common global experiences. One of the easiest

ways for most people to connect with their sexual nature is, well, *in* nature. And while the rust-red hues and expanse of a desert evokes a wild aliveness in one person, that same landscape might evoke fear of snake-bite and scorpions in another. Perhaps you



« *Sizzling Summer*
Robert Bridges

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prefer the primal rush of sunlit breakers on a warm beach or maybe the ferny and phallic majesty of ancient redwoods.

Other common ways sexual feelings are evoked in us are through dancing, creating art, performing, and yes, eating. Indeed, some people experience more sexual feelings eating or dancing than they do having sex. I notice that most gifted motivational speakers run a large amount of sexual energy and are able to masterfully circulate it to their audience, who in turn get turned on and “want what she’s having.”

In partnerships, sexual feelings often arise after a backlog of emotional energy gets released. One common example of this is where one

partner continually expresses their frustration and dissatisfaction while the other chronically withdraws. The stonewalling partner usually has a long list of evidence for why expressing their “negative” emotions will lead to no good. Yet, in a safe context, when the long-stoic partner finally takes a stand and blurts out their pent-up feelings, a common response from their partner is “I notice I’m feeling a lot of sexual energy toward you right now.” My guess is that the notion of “makeup sex” derives from this dynamic. When your sex life is off with someone whom you crave intimacy with, chances are there are some other feeling states—most likely anger, fear, and sadness—that are blocking your sexual feelings from flowing freely. —JOY HOSEY

“Squeeze and Pop” or “Spread”

In my experience, sexual feelings flow through two basic pathways: “squeeze and pop” and “spread.” Each pathway creates distinctly different physical sensations, breathing pattern, and visual bias. Sexual feelings tend to originate in the pelvic area, causing a fluttering to pulsing to throbbing warmth. In the “squeeze and pop” pathway, the energy stays focused in the genitals, perhaps with links to other specific erogenous zones, and is most commonly associated with orgasm-oriented sex. Breath is fast or held in, muscles are tense, and the visual field is fixated on the object of desire. If orgasm occurs, there is a climatic surge that quickly moves out or up, discharging pent-up energy and leaving deep relaxation in its wake.

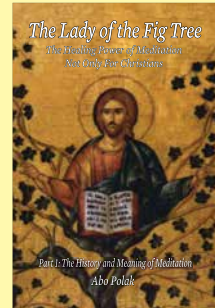
Along the second pathway, sexual feelings are invited to “spread”—maybe through breath, dance, a creative project, appreciating an exquisite mouthful

of food, or perhaps enjoying sex. There is a “nowhere I have to go, nothing I have to do” attitude that supports pleasure for pleasure’s sake. This powerful, undulating primal force spreads throughout the entire body, ultimately charging the skin with an electric, humming radiance. The breath becomes more oceanic in its rhythm, rising and falling as pulsing waves move through the body. Mind attunes to sensation and focus becomes soft. When ecstasy is present, eyelids may flutter and eyes roll back in their sockets.

Experiencing both pathways can be both delicious and therapeutic. Our capacity to consciously play with each opens us up to a greater breadth of pleasure and helps us honor our preferences. I firmly believe that normalizing and understanding sexual feelings is a fundamental key to accessing our birthright of radical aliveness.

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